When the ruin is new.[1] But it would be sufficient to say: 'because of demons'? — When there are two people.[2] If there are two people, then there is no suspicion either? — When both are licentious [there is suspicion]. — [It states] 'Because of falling debris'. It would be sufficient to say: 'because of suspicion and demons'? — When there are two decent people. [It states] 'Because of demons'. It would be sufficient to say; 'because of suspicion and falling debris'? — When there are two decent people going into a new ruin. But if there are two, then there is no danger of demons either? — In their haunt there is danger. If you like I can say, indeed the reference is to one man and to a new ruin which was situated in the fields; in which case there is no suspicion, for a woman would not be found in the fields, but the danger of demons does exist.

Our Rabbis taught: The night has four watches. These are the words of Rabbi. R. Nathan says: Three. What is the reason of R. Nathan? — It is written: So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came into the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch.[3] And one taught: Under 'middle' is to be understood only something which is preceded by one and followed by one. And Rabbi?[4] — 'The middle' means: one of the middle ones. And R. Nathan? — Not 'one of the middle ones' is written, but 'the middle' is written. What is Rabbi's reason? — R. Zerika, in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi, says: One verse reads, At midnight do I rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous ordinances.[5] And another verse reads: Mine eyes forestall the watches.[6] How is this?[7] — [This is possible only if] the night has four watches. And R. Nathan? — He is of the opinion of R. Joshua, as we have learnt: R. Joshua says: until the third hour, for such is the custom of kings, to rise in the third hour.[8] Six hours of the night and two hours of the day amount to two watches.[9] R. Ashi says: One watch and a half are also spoken of as 'watches'. (R. Zerika further said, in the name of R. Ammi in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: One may discuss in the presence of a dead body only things relating to the dead. R. Abba b. Kahana says: This refers only to religious matters,[10] but as for worldly matter there is no harm. Another version is: R. Abba b. Kahana says: This refers even to religious matters. How much more so to worldly matters!)

But did David rise at midnight? [Surely] he rose with the evening dusk? For it is written: I rose with the neshef and cried.[11] And how do you know that this word neshef means the evening? It is written: In the neshef, in the evening of the day, in the blackness of night and the darkness![12] — R. Oshaia, in the name of R. Aha, replies: David said: Midnight never passed me by in my sleep. R. Zera says: Till midnight he used to slumber like a horse,[13] from thence on he rose with the energy of a lion. R. Ashi says: Till midnight he studied the Torah, from thence on he recited songs and praises. But does neshef mean the evening? Surely neshef means the morning? For it is written: And David slew them from the 'neshef' to the evening 'ereb of the next day,[14] and does not this mean, from the 'morning dawn' to the evening? — No. [It means:] from the [one] eventide to the [next] eventide. If so, let him write: From neshef to neshef, or from 'ereb to 'ereb? — Rather, said Raba: There are two kinds of neshef: [the morning neshef], when the evening disappears [nashaf] and the morning arrives,[15] [and the evening neshef], when the day disappears [nashaf] and the evening arrives.[16]

But did David know the exact time of midnight? Even our teacher Moses did not know it! For it is written: About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt.[17] Why 'about midnight'? Shall we say that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: 'About midnight'? Can there be any doubt in the mind of God?[18] Hence we must say that God told him 'at midnight', and he came and said: 'About midnight'. Hence he [Moses] was in doubt; can David then have known it? — David had a sign. For so said R. Aha b. Bizana in the name of R. Simeon the Pious: A harp was hanging above David's bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a North wind came and blew upon it and it played of itself. He arose immediately and studied the Torah till the break of dawn. After the break of dawn the wise men of Israel came in to see him and said to him: Our lord, the King, Israel your people require sustenance! He said to them: Let them go out and make a living one from the other.[19] They said to